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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2975
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2017
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2138
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0680
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1415
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1773
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2194
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4625
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1280
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000478

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2018

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SUBJECT: NEW MDC MP FEARS FOR SAFETY, HOPES FOR ELECTION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Glenn Warren for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Newly elected MDC MP for Mutasa South, Michek Kagurabadzwa is in hiding, fearing arrest and detention. Press reports indicate that five MDC MPs have been jailed in recent weeks. Despite the ongoing violence in the countryside, including in his own constituency, Kagurabadzwa remains optimistic that Zimbabweans will vote MDC in the upcoming June 27 presidential runoff. He praised Voice of America's Studio 7 news show as a vital source of information to rural voters and recognized the need to plan now for MDC polling officials in the coming runoff. END SUMMARY.

Newly Elected MDC MP in Hiding

¶2. (C) On May 29, Embassy officials met with Michek Kagurabadzwa, the newly elected Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Member of Parliament (MP) for Mutasa South - a rural constituency in the eastern province of Manicaland. The MDC won Mutasa South handily in the March 29 election. Kagurabadzwa, who was removed by the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) from his position as mayor of Mutare in 2005, said he won his parliamentary seat by about 8,000 to his opponents 3,000 votes; MDC presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai also carried the constituency handily.

¶3. (C) Kagurabadzwa reported that he had been in hiding in Harare for one week, staying in a safe house. He reported that he is on the same target "list" as another newly elected MDC MP, Iain Kay from Marondera in nearby Mashonaland East. (NOTE: According to press reports, Kay was arrested two weeks ago on charges of "inciting violence" and he continues to be held in prison in Mutoko, over an hour from Harare. Kay was granted bail on May 23, but the State's appeal means he will stay in jail at least until a second hearing on June 4. Several other MDC MPs have also been arrested in the last couple of weeks. END NOTE.) Kagurabadzwa said unknown individuals (possibly police) had been to his home twice, his

office three times, and friends' homes in the last week looking for him. Despite his fears, he planned on returning home soon to continue campaigning for Tsvangirai for the June 27 presidential runoff.

14. (C) The new MP believes that he is being targeted, in part, because of the shelter he provided to victims of Operation Murambatsvina, the 2005 government campaign to destroy opposition strongholds that left some 700,000 displaced. As the mayor of Mutare, the main city along the Mozambican border, he provided shelter to some of these internally displaced people (IDPs). He also took the United Nations representatives to the high density areas in Mutare where the IDPs were staying and gave interviews to the New York Times, in direct violation of orders from central authorities in Harare. Shortly thereafter, Kagurabadzwa was fired from his position as mayor by the GOZ.

Optimistic about the June 27 runoff

15. (C) Regarding the June 27 runoff, Kagurabadzwa remains optimistic that his constituency will come out and vote again. He declared that people will not vote for ZANU-PF if given the chance to vote. The MDC needs to focus its efforts on sending polling agents to rural areas, as some polling places were without MDC monitors during the March 29 elections. Within his own area, he will move urban agents to rural polling places to both ensure broad coverage and reduce

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the potential for rural intimidation on the local MDC polling official. He said that all MPs would meet on May 30 to coordinate their strategies for distributing agents.

Rural Constituency Craves VOA

16. (C) Kagurabadzwa praised Studio 7 (the local Voice of America news program that airs in English and local languages once a day) as playing a significant role in informing people and as an alternative to the GOZ-sponsored media. Despite the crucial role Studio 7 plays, he said that there were not enough radios in rural areas. Unfortunately, many had been confiscated by the government late last year. He reported that rural voters in his area relied on hand-crank radios supplied by a local farm workers union, General Agricultural and Plantation Workers of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ). He asked that we look into repeating the Studio 7 broadcast, as it is sometimes partially or completely jammed by the GOZ. (NOTE: Starting June 1, Studio 7 will broadcast twice daily. END NOTE.)

COMMENT

17. (C) Kagurabadzwa is certainly correct about the existence of a "list" of targeted officials. In addition to Iain Kay's recent arrest, MDC faction leader Arthur Mutambara was arrested on Sunday as was Eric Matinenga, a prominent lawyer and newly-elected parliamentarian for Buheru. ZANU-PF appears to be complementing its campaign of violence, designed to intimidate MDC supporters, with an effort to destroy MDC organizational capacity through the arrest of officials and parliamentarians. END COMMENT.

Warren